

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20  
TRSE-00 /077 W  
-----116454 162116Z /73

P 161820Z MAY 78  
FM AMCONSUL PALERMO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2474  
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMCONSUL FLORENCE  
AMCONSUL GENOA  
AMCONSUL MILAN  
AMCONSUL NAPLES  
AMCONSUL TRIESTE  
AMCONSUL TURIN

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 PALERMO 0507/1

E.O. 11652: NA  
TAGS: PINT IT.  
SUBJECT: MAY 14-15 ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS IN SICILY

SUMMARY: THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL SHIFT TOWARD THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WAS FULLY CONFIRMED IN MAY 14-15 VOTING IN SICILY. ALTHOUGH THE PCI IMPROVED ON ITS 1972 LOCAL ELECTION STRENGTH, THE PARTY REGISTERED A SHARP LOSS WITH RESPECT TO ITS SHOWING IN SICILY IN THE 1976 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. THE FAR RIGHT ALSO SUFFERED HEAVY LOSSES IN COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS BALLOTING IN SICILY. THE SUCCESS OF THE PSI, A GOOD REPUBLICAN PARTY TURNOUT AND EVEN A SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT FOR THE LIBERALS DEMONSTRATED THE UNEXPECTED RELIANCE OF THE INTERMEDIARY PARTIES. END OF SUMMARY.

1. OVER 439,000 VOTERS IN 91 SICILIAN CITIES AND TOWNS WERE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN THE MAY 14-15 ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS. OF  
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THESE 81.29 PERCENT VOTED# UP FROM 78.85 PERCENT IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS OF 1972. SET FORTH BELOW IS A TABLE SHOWING RESULTS OF THE VOTE IN THE 41 CITIES WHERE 271,051 VOTED UNDER THE PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM WHERE BOTH THE LARGER SIZE OF THE ELECTORAL SAMPLING AND THE COMPETITION OF THE NATIONAL PARTIES MAKES FOR EASIER COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS RESULTS AND NATIONAL RETURNS. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, 24 COMMUNES - HALF OF THEM WITH POPULATION OVER 5,000 -

WILL VOTE ON MAY 28.

## 2. COMPARATIVE ELECTIONS RESULTS - SICILY:

PARTY	1978	1972	1976
DC	43.88	36.15	41.98
PCI	19.18	18.27	31.02
PSI	15.44	12.32	9.96
PSDI	4.31	6.40	3.88
PRI	5.04	4.41	2.49
PLI	1.41	1.63	0.86
DN	1.04	-	-
MSI-DN	4.94	8.13	8.22
DP	0.42	-	1.03
MIXED-LEFT	1.52	5.31	-
MIXED-CENTER LEFT	0.36	0.93	-
MIXED-CENTER	1.55	2.78	-
MIXED-RIGHT	-	0.49	-
"HETEROGENEOUS"	0.85	3.18	0.13

3. AS THE ABOVE TABLE INDICATES, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WERE FAR AND AWAY THE ELECTIONS' MAJOR WINNERS WITH AN INCREASE OF UNCLASSIFIED

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7.5 PERCENT OVER THE PARTY'S 1972 ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTION RESULTS AND A NEAR 2 PERCENT OVER THE PARTY'S SHOWING IN THE 1976 POLITICAL ELECTIONS. THE COMMUNISTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, GAINED LESS THAN 1 PERCENT OVER THE PARTY'S PREVIOUS LOCAL-ELECTION VOTE, BUT LOST NEARLY 12 PERCENT IN COMPARISON WITH ITS VOTE IN THE 1976 NATIONAL ELECTIONS. THE MSI-DN WAS THE OTHER BIG LOSER WITH NEAR 4 PERCENT LOSS IN COMPARISON WITH THE ELCTIONS OF 1972 AND 1976. WHILE THE SMALLER INTER,EDiate PARTIES MAINTAINED A SLIGHTLY STRENGTHENED THEIR STANDINGS IN THE PREVIOUS ELECTIONS, THE PSI GAINED OVER 3 PERCENT IN COMPARISON WITH THE PARTY'S 1972 LOCAL-ELECTION RESULTS AND OVER 5 PERCENT WHEN COMPARED WITH THE 1976 PARLIAMENT-ARY ELECTIONS.

4. IN ADDITION TO THE LOSS SUFFERED BY THE PCI IN ITS OWN NAME, THE PARTY ALSO ABSORBED SUBSTANTIAL LOSSES IN THOSE "MIXED-LEFT" LISTS WHICH THE PCI DOMINATED, THOUGH UNDER OTHER COLORS. NOT ONLY WERE FEWE SUCH LISTS PRESENTED IN 1978, THOSE THAT WERE PRESENTED SUFFERED HEAVILY AT THE POLLS. AS A RESULT, THE SOME 15 CITY COUNCIL SEATS WHICH THE PCI GAINED SICILY WIDE UNDER ITS OWN BANNER, SHOULD BE COMPARED WITH A LOSS, PRIMARILY TO THE PCI, OF SOME 34 SEATS HELD UNDER THE MIXED-LEFT RUBRIC.

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5. RETURNS IN INDIVIDUAL CITIES PROVED EQUALLY DISAPPOINTING FOR THE PCI. GELA, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS THE LARGEST CITY (CA. 70,000) TO VOTE IN THE MEZZOGIORNO AND HAS LONG BEEN TROUBLED BY EMPLOYMENT INSTABILITY IN THE LARGE ANIC PETROCHEMICAL COMPLEX AND BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT INEFFECTIVENESS. HOPING TO DRAW ADVANTAGE FROM THIS SITUATION, THE PCI JOINED FORCES IN 1976 WITH TWO DISSIDENT CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, THE PSI AND THE PSDI, TO GOVERN THE CITY ON A REFORM PLATFORM. UNABLE TO MAKE EVEN A SMALL DENT IN THE CITY'S MANYFOLD PROBLEMS, THE COMMUNISTS SUFFERED A HEAVE 13 PERCENT LOSS (FROM 28 PERCENT TO 15 PERCENT) ON ITS SHOWING IN 1972. VOTES LOST TO THE PCI WENT TO THE DC, PSI AND PRI RATHER THAN TO THE MSI AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE CASE IN THE PAST. SIMILAR SETBACKS, ALTHOUGH OF SOMEWHAT LESS MAGNITUDE, HIT THE PCI IN SUCH SMALLER CENTER AS NISCEMI, FAVARA AND PACHINO. INDEED, MANY ADMINISTRATIONS DOMINATED BY THE PCI UNDER THE MAJORITY VOTING SYSTEM WERE ALSO OVERTURNED. IN PALERMO PROVINCE ALONE, THREE SUCH COMMUNES WERE SUBTRACTED FRO LONG-TIME PCI DOMINANCE.

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COMMENT: FIRST-BLUSH REACTIONS TO THE RESULTS IN SICILY LARGELY REFLECTED NATIONAL PARTY ASSESSMENTS. THE COMMUNISTS, FOR EXAMPLE, RECOGNIZED A DC SUCCESS, A PSI RECOVERY AND A PCI INCREASE OVER THE PARTY'S 1972 TURNOUT. DC REGIONAL SECRETARY NICOLETTI NOTED HIS PARTY'S GENERAL SATISFACTION, BUT SUGGESTED FURTHER ANALYSIS OF THE RETURNS MUST COME BEFORE MORE DEFINITIVE JUDGEMENTS. THE PSI, CLEARLY PLEASED, HAS TAKEN THE PARTY'S SHOWING AS VOTER APPROVAL OF THE TURIN CONGRESS RESULTS. OTHER INITIAL REACTIONS WOULD SUGGEST THAT NONE OF THE PARTIES, WHETHER WINNERS OR LOSERS, ARE SUGGESTING A CHANGE IN THE "QUADRO POLITICO" ON THE STRAIGHT OF LAST WEEKEND'S RETURNS. BY THE SAME TOKEN, THOUGH MANY CAN SEE A HIGH EMOTIONAL CONTENT IN THE WAKE OF THE MORO EVENTS, THEY ALSO CONCLUDE THAT THE MAY 14-15 VOTE ALSO SIGNALLED GREATER MODERATION AND SOME WITHDRAWAL FROM THOSE PREMISES WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THE STRONG PCI SHOWING IN 1976. COLLINS

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